

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 188200

CODEL WOLFF/YATRON

FOLLOWING REPEAT SANTIAGO 6487 ACTION SECSTATE 08 AUG 77

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6487

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (YATRON-WOLFF), CI SHUM
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS AND CODELS: PROBLEM OF MISSING PERSONS

1. SUMMARY: SOME RELATIVES OF PEOPLE ALLEGEDLY SPIRITED AWAY BY CHILEAN SECURITY SERVICES HAVE APPROACHED THE EMBASSY REQUESTING AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH CODELS YATRON AND WOLFF. WE HAVE BEEN NON-COMMITTAL BUT PESSIMISTIC BASED UPON THE CODELS' HEAVY SCHEDULES. THE PROBLEM OF THE CHILEAN "DISAPPEAREDS" IS HIGHLY CHARGED, WITH POLITICAL AS WELL AS HUMANITARIAN ANGLES. TAKING PRO'S AND CON'S INTO ACCOUNT, WE RECOMMEND THAT A CODEL STAFFER(S) AND EMBASSY OFFICER MEET WITH A SMALL GROUP REPRESENTING THE FAMILIES OF MISSING
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PERSONS. END SUMMARY.

2. BETWEEN LATE SEPTEMBER 1973 AND DECEMBER 1976 BETWEEN 500-800 PEOPLE DISAPPEARED IN CHILE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES POSSIBLY INVOLVING THE SECURITY SERVICES. (THERE HAVE BEEN TWO SIMILAR CASES IN 1977.) MANY RELATIVES OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE GROUPED THEMSELVES

UNDER AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION WHICH, ALTHOUGH NOT DIRECTLY RUN BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY, DRAWS UPON THE VICARIATE'S LEGAL AND RESEARCH RESOURCES AND BY AND LARGE ENJOYS ITS SUPPORT. WE HAVE NO REASON TO IMPUNE THE MOTIVES OF THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE RELATIVES' ORGANIZATION: THEY ARE IN THE CRUEL POSITION OF NOT KNOWING WHETHER THEIR NEXT OF KIN ARE DEAD OR ALIVE. WE ALSO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT SOME AMONG THEM, PARTICULARLY THE COMMUNISTS AND RELATIVES OF COMMUNISTS, SEE IN THE "DISAPPEARED" PROBLEM A VULNERABILITY THAT THE GOC CANNOT OVERCOME. FOR HARDBOILED POLITICAL REASONS THEY SEEK TO KEEP DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION RIVETED ON THIS SUBJECT.

3. DURING VISITS BY SENIOR USG OFFICIALS IN 1976 AND DURING THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIS JUNE, THE ORGANIZATION UNDERTOOK HEADLINE GRABBING ACTIVITIES SUCH AS THE HUNGER STRIKE AT SANTIAGO-BASED ECLA. FOR ITS PART, THE GOC HAS DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO DEPICTING THESE ACTIVITIES AS A COMMUNIST-INSTIGATED "SHOW".

4. HALF A DOZEN RELATIVES HAVE ALREADY COME BY THE EMBASSY TO INQUIRE ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF MEETING WITH THE CODELS TO PRESENT THEIR PROBLEMS FACE-TO-FACE.
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THEY INCLUDE SOME WHOSE POLITICAL MOTIVATION SEEMS CLEAR (COMMUNISTS AND OTHERS) AND SOME VETERANS OF THE ECLA STRIKE. WE HAVE HEDGED, NOT WANTING TO INVOLVE ANY OF THE CODEL IN THIS CONTROVERSIAL NO-WIN SITUATION. WE HAVE, OF COURSE, PROMISED THAT ANY DOCUMENTS OR PETITIONS THEY GIVE US WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO THE CODELS BY EMBASSY OFFICERS.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, WHATEVER THE MOTIVATION OF THE ACTIVITISTS AMONG THE RELATIVES, THE FACT REMAINS THAT HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT ONLY BY BRINGING THEIR PROBLEM TO THE ATTENTION OF FOREIGN VISITORS AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE CAN THEY HOPE TO EVENTUALLY FIND OUT THE FATES OF THEIR KIN. FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS ALONE, WE BELIEVE A PERSONAL CONTACT WITH SOMEONE IN THE CODEL IS APPROPRIATE.

6. EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION: WE SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT INFORM THE CODELS OF THIS SITUATION. WE SUGGEST THAT A STAFFER(S) AND AN EMBASSY OFFICER MEET WITH 5-10 OF THE RELATIVES AT THE EMBASSY OR ON NEUTRAL GROUND TO RECEIVE THEIR DOCUMENTATION

AND DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH THEM. WE BELIEVE
A LARGE, PROMINENT CODEL CONTINGENT WOULD PLAY
INTO BOTH GOC AND OPPONENTS' HANDS.
BOYATT.
UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER".

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